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ABSTRACT

A report is given of reading material selection and preferences of leisure services personnel. A survey was conducted of the California Association of Parks and Recreation Commissioners and Board members and members of the Cal-SPRE, the education arm of the California State Society. A third sample consisted of members of the National Consortium on Physical Education and Recreation for the Handicapped. The questions dealt with readership of daily, weekly and monthly newspapers and professional magazines. The questionnaire was rather extensive, asking for the specific types of literature subscribed to and the amount of money and time spent pursuing professional reading. With the small percentage of return and the variable sub-groups surveyed, only general observations and descriptive statistics are presented. All three groups are reported more for comparative purposes since they vary greatly in their make-up, geographical representation, and professional commitment to leisure services. The data are presented with brief narrative comments. (JD)

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READING SOURCES, VIEWS AND HABITS OF SELECT LEISURE SERVICES PERSONNEL--A SURVEY

Larry L. Neal

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READING SOURCES, VIEWS AND HABITS OF SELECT LEISURE SERVICES PERSONNEL--A SURVEY

by Dr. Larry L. Neal*

Introduction

It is often expressed that you can tell much about a person by the friends one keeps or the clothes one wears or the kind of speech used. This article expands the identifiers to include the type of literature one reads. It is apparent that some books may have great influence on the individual and collective behavior of a group, discipline or nation. Religious books immediately come to mind. In addition, whole decades or periods of time can be identified by fiction and non-fiction best sellers. You may recall the impact of such notable works as The Organization Man by William Whyte, Jr. in the mid 50s and Rachael Carson's Silent Spring in the early 60s. More recently has been the tandem texts a decade apart by Alvin Toffler--Future Shock (1970) and The Third Wave (1980). The best sellers Megatrends, In Search of Excellence and The One Minute-Manager currently have shared the spotlight and influence.

This article does not focus on block buster books that seemingly have a short life when viewed in a professional perspective of several decades of service. What does seem to influence professionals would be the daily, weekly and monthly newspapers and professional magazines. Little has been addressed regarding the reading tastes, styles and habits of leisure services personnel with these sources since Dr. David Gray and Barbara Lloyd reported on "What Recreation and Park People Read" in the October 1969 issue of CPRS Magazine

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following their report to the San Francisco District S.W. Conference in February 1969.

Project S.I.R.

A research associate, Dr. Alan Ewert and I investigated this subject by formulating an eight-page booklet using the questionnaire format and heading it Project SIR (for Study in Reading). Conducted in 1983, three sub-samples were drawn; two from within the ranks of the California Park and Recreation Society--the California Association of Park and Recreation Commissioners and Board Members [throughout, referred to as Commissioners], and the members of Cal-SPRE (the education arm of the California State Society). The third sample constituted members of the National Consortium on Physical Education and Recreation for the handicapped (Therapeutic Recreation/Adaptive) [NCPEHR]. Table 1 shows a comparison of the generally low response rate for both the '69 and '83 studies mentioned above.

The Project SIR questionnaire* was rather extensive, asking for the specific types of literature subscribed to and the amount of money and time spent pursuing professional reading. With the small percentage return and the variable sub-groups surveyed only general observations and descriptive statistics will be presented here. All three groups have been reported more for comparative purposes since they vary greatly in their make-up, geographical representation and professional commitment to leisure services.

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*Copies available by requesting on agency letter--mail to Institute of Recreation Research and Service, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403.

Table 1. Return Rate Comparisons for Reading Surveys in Leisure Services '68-'69 by Gray/Lloyd and '83 by Neal/Ewert

Names of Study Groups	Year	Total Population	Study Sample Size	Usable Responses Returned	Percentage Return
National Sample of NRPA	1969	5,300	Every 20th = 265	42	16%
Members of CPRS	1969	605	Every 6th = 101	40	38%
National Sample of NCPERH	1983	62	62	24	39%
California Commissioners	1983	80	80	18	23%
Cal/SPRE	1983	60	60	17	25%

Priority Expenditures

A dimension of the reading motive includes the availability of the printed matter. With the majority of magazines, books, journals and professionally related newsletters coming through the mail, Project SIR devised an attitudinal question which asked hypothetically if you had $300.00 to spend for reading material, how would you budget your money--how would you divide up your money. The respondent was given the common choices of professional reading resources. Table 2 shows the five reading categories and the data generated.

Table 2. Hypothetical Spending of Funds for Five Types of Reading Material; Amount and Proportion by Sub-Sample Using a $100 Base

Type Reading Material	Cal-SPRE (N = 18)		Commissioners (N = 17)		National Consortium [NCPERH] (N = 24)	
	Amount	%	Amount	%	Amount	%
Newspapers	$14.43	14	$15.30	15	$11.04	11
Professional Journals	30.68	31	22.33	22	37.57	38
Books	32.47	32	28.67	29	35.62	36
Newsletters	4.49	4	17.67	18	6.74	7
Magazines	17.93	18	16.03	16	9.03	9

It is apparent that professional journals and books head the list of priority reading materials but in varying patterns. The Commissioners are less committed to these sources and favor the expenditures for more newsletters. Fairly uniform agreement was expressed for newspapers deemed common to any such group. While this survey did not have a baseline for comparison, the Leisure Industry Digest at the time of this study (Vol. 3, No. 19 of October 1983) reported Editor and Publisher Magazine's findings (September 17, 1983, p. 19) of New York Times' compilation of reading surveys. Amid a number of studies and findings, several trends pertinent to this study were reported:

- Overall, Americans are reading more than ever before.
- There were over 42,500 different books published in 1981 and 1982.
- Of these books each year nearly 3.300, or almost 8% represent what Publishers Weekly classifies as sports, recreation, travel, music and art titles.

- Average annual book readership is up from 2.75 books in 1970 to 4.89 books in 1980.
- Three-fourths of all American households read a paper any given day (USA Today, April 30, 1984).
- Library usage has grown twice as fast as the population in the last 40 years.
- A Delaware study determined the average median reading time per day per household was 158 minutes (high school education or less averaged 55 minutes/day while college graduates read 194 minutes).
- Younger people read more than senior citizens. Seniors read less now than when they worked. This was further substantiated in the Opinion Research Corporation's study report entitled "America at Leisure: The Games People Play" reported in NRPA's Dateline (Vol. 5, No. 11, November 1982, p. 5). "More than 77percent of the general public are frequent readers with books and magazines each claiming an identical hold [note Table 2]. Not surprisingly, upscale consumers read more than the less affluent . . . it is interesting . . . an inverse relationship between age and the frequency of reading: younger (under 35) people are more likely to be frequent readers than older people." This same 1982 report found households to spend an average of $10.40 a month on magazines and an even larger $15.20 a month on books.
- USA Today's "USA Snapshot" (November 29, 1983, p. 10) reports teen use of the media by gender. Table 3 below shows limited proportionate reading time as compared to radio and television but similar amounts of time expenditures by both boys and girls.

Table 3. Teen Media Use Hours Spent per Week by Gender

Medium	Males	Females
Television	12.04	11.27
Radio	11.44	13.25
Newspapers	3.28	2.91
Magazines	2.87	2.78
Movies	2.55	2.47

These help to place the findings of Project SIR in proper perspective.

Identification of Specific Reading Materials

The two professional groups (Cal-SPRE and National Consortium) were further studied as to the specific professional journals to which members subscribed. Because of the diversity of the data, Figures 1 and 2 were arranged by identifying all journals in descending order with both ratings in the top three and all other categorized as mentioned. The diversity of disciplines allowed for only eight journals to appear on both lists totaling nearly 40 and requiring separate figures. The list in both cases is long and impressive and in both cases respondents reported an average of 7.9 journals for Cal-SPRE and 6.3 journals for the National Consortium. The figures do not uncover any trends deemed to be surprising. It is gratifying to observe the large percentage of Cal-SPRE respondents who receive or read Parks and Recreation (75%) and Leisure Lines (69%). JOPER (69%) and the Journal of Leisure Research (1963) also drew the highest proportion of Cal-SPRE readers. The respondents for the National Consortium listed fewer overall journals and did not have one predominant journal recognized; JOPER drawing the highest proportion with 65%. In reporting the listing of journals no qualitative or quantitative assessment was sought except for the rank order by the respondents accounted for in the figures below.

Figure 1. Ranking of Professional Journals by Members of Cal-SPRE, March 1983 (N = 16 responses to this question)

Journal Title	Number of Times Identified: Ranked 1st	Ranked 2nd	Ranked 3rd	Mentioned/ Not Ranked	Total
Parks & Recreation	6	1	1	4	12
CPRS & Leisure Lines	3	4	1	3	11
JOPERD (including Leisure Today)	-	-	5	6	11
Journal of Leisure Research	1	3	1	5	10
Journal of Parks & Recreation Admininstration	1	-	2	3	6
Therapeutic Recreation Journal	1	1	-	4	6
Parks & Recreation Resources*	-	1	-	4	5
Leisure Sciences	-	1	1	2	4
Psychology Today	-	1	-	3	4
U.S. News & World Report	1	-	-	2	3
Camping	1	-	-	1	2
Gerontologist	1	-	-	1	2
The Futurist	-	1	-	1	2
Research Quarterly	-	-	1	1	2
Leisure Ability	-	-	1	1	2
World Leisure & Recreation Journal	-	-	-	2	2
Ecological Lan. Quarterly	-	1	-	-	1
Maine Technical Journal	1	-	-	-	1
Science News	-	-	1	-	1
Society	-	-	1	-	1
AAL Reporter	-	1	-	-	1
Grounds Maintenance	-	1	-	-	1
Weeds, Trees & Turf	-	-	1	-	1
Those not ranked but cited:					
Journal of Outdoor Education	1				
Trends	1				
Programming Trends Information	1				
Annals of Tourism Research	1				
Journal of Travel Research	1				
NIRSA Journal	1				
American Journal of Sociology	1				
Contemporary Sociology	1				
Journal of Community Action	1				
Journal of Gerontology	1				
Science '83	1				
Tennis Industry	1				
Park Maintenance	1				
National Parks	1				
Landscape & Irrigation	1				
Landscape West	1				
ILAM (Great Britain)	1				
The Economist	1				
Chemical of Higher Education	1				

*No longer published

Figure 2. Ranking of Professional Journals by Members of the National Consortium on Physical Education and Recreation for the Handicapped--March 1983 (N = 20 usable responses)

Journal Title	Number of Times Identified: Ranked 1st	Ranked 2nd	Ranked 3rd	Mentioned/ Not Ranked	Total
Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance (JOPERD including Leisure Today)	4	4	1	4	13
Therapeutic Recreation Journal	4	1	1	4	10
Research Quarterly	2	3	1	3	9
Perceptual & Motor Skills	1	1	2	4	8
Parks & Recreation	-	-	1	7	8
Exceptional Child	-	4	1	2	6
American Journal of Mental Deficiency	1	2	-	3	6
Mental Retardation	1	-	-	3	4
The Physical Educator	-	-	1	3	4
Leisure Sciences	-	-	1	3	4
American Corrective Therapy Journal	2	-	1	1	4
Journal for TEaching Motor Behavior	1	-	1	2	4
Journal of Learning Disabled	-	-	2	1	3
Exceptional Education	-	-	1	2	3
Journal of Leisure Research	-	2	-	-	2
Update & Able Bodies	1	-	1	-	2
Leisure Ability	1	-	1	-	2
Journal of Exceptional Psychology	-	-	1	1	2
International Journal-Research in Mental Retardation	-	1	1	-	2
Psychological Abstracts	-	-	1	-	1
Washington Reporter	1	-	-	-	1
Grantsmanship News	-	-	1	-	1
Wall Street Journal	-	1	-	-	1
Not ranked but mentioned:					
Varied State Journals	6				
NTRS Newsletter	5				
Psychology Today	3				
Phi Delta Kappan	3				
Journal of Park & Recreation Administration	3				
Sports Medicine	3				
Leisure Information Quarterly	2				
Teaching Exceptional Children	2				
Journal of Social Psychology	1				
World Leisure & Recreation Journal	1				
Exceptional Parent	1				
Brain	1				
Journal of Nervous & Mental Disorders	1				
Rehabilitation Engineering	1				
Journal of Severe & Profoundly Retarded	1				

Preferences for Various Features

Editors, authors, readers, advertisers; senders and receivers, if you will, are all interested in what should be set in print. From the various roles or positions the form, format and content may take on different meaning or value. Editors--it is assumed, want to meet the objectives of the publication and influence the readership. The authors wish to have their ideas presented in a format for greatest impact. Advertisers are concerned about placement, visual impact, readership profiles. While the depictions above may be sparse and incomplete, it is generally agreed that the readers are "king." Publications are a reader-driven enterprise--limited readership, no publication. It is puzzling that such profession oriented reader surveys have not been more prevalent and that such information as provided in Table 4 below is not more readily available within the leisure services field.

The data in Table 4 was derived by asking each respondent to rank each of ten common sections or features which appear in many, if not most, journals. Since some did not rank all ten, the averages were used to determine the rank order of features.

General consensus placed feature articles and research articles as highest priority features and ranked advertising last. It would seem consistent and appropriate that lay Commissioners would strongly favor the feedback mechanism of letters to the editor above the other two groups studied. The overall high ranking for research articles and research briefs by all three groups should not go unnoticed.

Table 4. Rank Order of Ten Features Commonly Appearing in Professional Journals, by Three Study Populations, March 1983

Features	Cal-SPRE (Leisure Educators) (N = 17)		Cal-Commissioners (Citizen-Lay) (N = 17)		National Consortium (Therapehtuc/ Adaptive) (N = 23)	
	$\bar{x}$ rank	rank order	$\bar{x}$ rank	rank order	$\bar{x}$ rank	rank order
Feature Articles	2.2	1	2.7	1	2.4	2
Research Articles	3.6	2	5.1	4	2.1	1
Research Briefs	2.7	3	3.5	2	2.8	3
News Items	3.8	4	5.2	5	6.1	6
Book Reviews	5.3	5	5.8	7	6.3	7
Personalities	5.4	6	7.9	9	7.1	8
Editorials	5.8	7	5.3	6	5.4	4
Letters to the Editor	7.2	8	5.0	3	5.8	5
New Products	7.6	7	6.1	8	7.3	9
Advertising	8.9	10	8.6	10	8.5	10

Depth of Leisure "Professional Reading"

An attempt was made to determine both where one reads professional literature (e.g., home, office or in transit) and how much time was spent in the pursuit. The method of collection deemed appropriate was a reading diary format where respondents were asked to list what was read, cite where it took place and, record in quarter hour time blocks the average time spent per month. While the attempt seemed admirable and the respondents were compliant, the results could not be easily tabulated and there were no apparent trends

which could be reported and generalized. What has been learned from the exercise was feared at the onset of the survey--gathering uniform, treatable data from such an open-ended question format is almost impossible. Several recommendations surface from the experience. First, the study population should be very discrete, highly motivated and encouraged to attend to the task of complete recall for a specified period of time. Second, the sample should be representative of the sub-population so that generalizations can be drawn. Third, the distinction between recreational reading and reading for professional enhancement must be clearly stated so that subjects will respond consistently.

One finding from the responses can be made. The observation made earlier by Gray and Lloyd that much time spent by professionals reading current literature is directed toward professional journals seemed to be upheld. This is fertile ground for future research. With the large amount of professional publications circulating (the prevalent recall by these respondents each citing on the average over six journals) and with the large cost invested in writing, publishing and distributing such journals--it behooves us to study the end result--the amount of time spent reading and the ultimate influence these journals have toward advancing the readers and the profession. It is well to echo earlier advice given by Gray and Lloyd. Professionals must read widely including outside sources to provide a broader perspective and what they call "transfer, perspective and comparison."

Conclusion

More in the way of reading surveys should be done. This is preliminary and exploratory but provides some insight as to the breadth (yet not depth) of reading habits within educators, commissioners and therapeutic/adaptive leisure services personnel. All respondents were asked whether the literature

they identified in the survey met their reading needs; the vast majority (74%) said yes. Professional journals and books predominate as priority sources for reading expenditures followed by magazines, newspapers and newsletters.

One is impressed by the vast array of different publications acknowledged by the different groups studied. The "mast head" journals for the major national associations (NRPA, AAHPERD) and state society (CPRS) faired well as would be expected yet are certainly not the only reading resources--a healthy sign for the profession.

A void in this report; one that is addressed but not in a substantial way, are answers to the questions of how much time and effort and under what conditions do professionals read the literature provided. The difficulty in acquiring these data should not dissuade or deter us us from collecting this vital information.

NOTE: Special appreciation is extended to Dr. Lynn Jamieson, Dr. Hilmi Ibrahim and Bill Hillman associated with Cal-SPRE, California Association of Park and Recreation Commission and Board Members and the National Consortium respectively. They assured that all members of these three organizations were invited to participate in this survey.

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